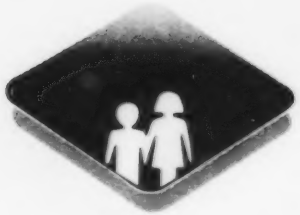

Child Care
A Community Partnership

Ministry of Women's Equality
Province of British Columbia

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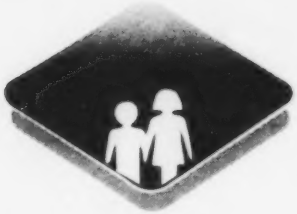

Child Care

A Community Partnership

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A First Step

Child care that is responsive to community needs, is the cornerstone of the provincial government's child care plan. Coordination, planning and community input are key features which will begin the process of stabilizing and expanding child care for British Columbia families.

Child Care: A Community Partnership lays the groundwork to meet these challenges on a number of fronts. The initiatives described in this document will not resolve the problems overnight, but they are a first step towards achieving the goal of coordinated, community-based child care services that meet parents' and children's needs.

To achieve this goal the following objectives have been set:

- to help communities address child care needs;
- to improve the quality, affordability and accessibility of all types of care;
- to stabilize existing child care facilities; and
- to expand child care services/options.

All British Columbians Are Affected By Child Care

Whether you have children or not, child care is an important component of a healthy economy and a healthy society. The Child Care Task Force identified a number of statistics related to child care which have a significant impact on our social and economic development.

For example:

- mothers with children under six years old earn $1.6 billion in British Columbia each year;
- mothers with children under 12 make up 62% of the labour force; and
- child care is an essential community service which enables parents to participate in the workforce.

The availability of child care is also an important factor in attracting and maintaining a skilled labour force. Quality child care is a necessary social support to single parent and low income families.

The payments that parents make for child care exceed $350 million annually. Approximately $150 million of this money goes back into the economy as caregivers spend their wages. Those respent wages likely account for the creation of an additional 3,000 jobs. Child care directly provides about 15,000 paid full-time jobs in British Columbia.

The Task Force on Child Care Report, *Showing We Care - A Child Care Strategy for the 90's*, very ably described the complex challenges of meeting communities' unique child care needs. The report identified the need for coordination and funding to support, stabilize and expand current child care services.

Who Will Be Responsible?

Government's commitment to child care is reflected in a partnership of ministries supporting child care. The Ministry of Women's Equality has the lead role to support, stabilize and expand child care. To accomplish this we will work with other ministries, local governments, community organizations and families.

The Ministry of Social Services will continue to address child care affordability for low income families through the Day Care Subsidy Program, and programs for children with special needs through the Special Needs Day Care Program. The Day Care Support and the Day Care Grants programs will be transferred from the Ministry of Social Services to the Ministry of Women's Equality.

The Ministry of Health will continue to regulate child care facilities and register early childhood educators. And the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology will continue to work with community colleges to provide caregiver training.

The initiatives described in this plan address the most critical child care needs and begin the process of stabilization and expansion. The responsibility of stabilizing child care will be carried out through policies and programs which are responsive to the diverse child care needs within communities. Coordinated child care policies and programs will mean streamlined service delivery, and development of services which fill identified service gaps. The Ministry of Women's Equality will be the primary source of information on all child care initiatives and will refer to other ministries when appropriate.
(See Partnerships and Responsibilities on page 3.)

Partnerships and Responsibilities

Inter-ministry Child Care Policy Coordination Committee

Health

- Regulating
- Early Childhood Educator Registration

Aboriginal Affairs

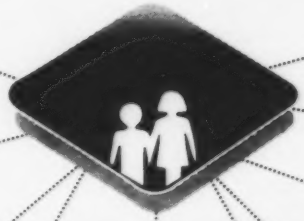
- Aboriginal Child Care Development

Education, Multiculturalism & Human Rights

- Immigrant and School-Based Child Care

British Columbia Buildings Corporation

- Child Care in Provincial Buildings



Women's Equality

Policy Development & Implementation

Mandated by Legislation

- Community Planning & Resource Development
- Programs to Enhance Quality (including enhanced Day Care Support Program, and Quality Enhancement Program)
- Stabilization Programs (including Infant/Toddler Incentive Grants, Financial Management Administration Support Program)
- Child Care Expansion Program (including Day Care Grants)

Policy Monitoring & Evaluation

- Maintenance of data base
- Statistical analysis & research
- Program Evaluation

Communication Planning & Implementation

- Public Information Initiatives

Municipal Affairs, Recreation & Housing

- Municipal by-laws

Finance

- Taxation

Social Services

- Subsidy
- Special Needs Day Care

Economic Development, Small Business & Trade

- Child Care as a Small Business

Advanced Education, Training & Technology

- Training

How Will These Responsibilities Be Carried Out?

A Child Care Development Branch has been established in the Ministry of Women's Equality, which will:

- **develop and implement policies and programs,**

including:
- Financial Management and Administration Support Program
- Infant/Toddler Incentive Grants
- Community Planning Grants
- Day Care Support Program Expansion
- Quality Enhancement Grants
- Child Care Expansion Program
- Day Care Grants Program Expansion
- Public Information Program

- **work with other ministries to coordinate child care policies and programs and address emerging issues,**

including:
- Special Needs Day Care Program (Ministry of Social Services)
- Day Care Subsidy Program (Ministry of Social Services)
- Licensing Program (Ministry of Health)
- Early childhood education training (Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology)
- Recruitment and retention of aboriginal & ethnic caregivers (Ministries of Aboriginal Affairs and Advanced Education, Training and Technology)
- Local Government Working Group bylaw review (Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Recreation and Housing)
- Aboriginal child care committee (Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs)
- School-based child care (Ministry of Education)
- Review of taxation policy (Ministry of Finance and Corporate Affairs)
- Child care as a small business (Ministry of Economic Development, Small Business and Trade)
- Child care in provincial buildings (B.C. Buildings Corporation)

◆ develop legislation

Child care legislation will be prepared for the 1993/94 legislative session. This legislation will formalize the role of government in the development and implementation of comprehensive child care services.

◆ take the lead in child care research

A child care data base has been developed which will provide statistical information that is unique in Canada. British Columbia is the only province to date that has surveyed each licensed facility for information related to capacity and enrollment by age of child and by type of child care facility.

Information collected includes: fees charged, operating costs, number of trained and untrained staff, level of training, wages and benefits. This information will be updated regularly providing a useful resource for policy development and community planning.

◆ provide public information

Public information will be developed to assist community support and participation in the development and delivery of child care services. Information on programs and services will be available to parents and interested individuals and organizations.

Coordinated and ongoing public information initiatives will include quarterly publication of the *Child Care Information Update*, program materials, and, resource materials to support quality child care.

The Child Care Development Branch will also act as a clearinghouse for information about all government child care programs and services.

◆ support the development of a provincial child care council

Composed of people in the community, the council will provide independent and expert advice to the Ministry of Women's Equality to ensure policies and programs are meeting community needs.

How Will Policy Coordination Happen?

While Women's Equality has been given responsibility for the support, stabilization and expansion of child care, eight other ministries and one Crown corporation have complementary child care responsibilities. Key staff from these ministries make up a committee which supports the government's child care objectives and ensures that child care policies and programs are coordinated.

The committee has representatives from: Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs; Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology; British Columbia Buildings Corporation; Ministry of Economic Development, Small Business and Trade; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Recreation and Housing; Ministry of Social Services; and, Ministry of Women's Equality.

The child care plan is the result of the collaboration of these ministries, guided by the report of the Task Force on Child Care. This vital partnership will continue to play a key role in government's commitment to child care.

How Will Communities Have Input?

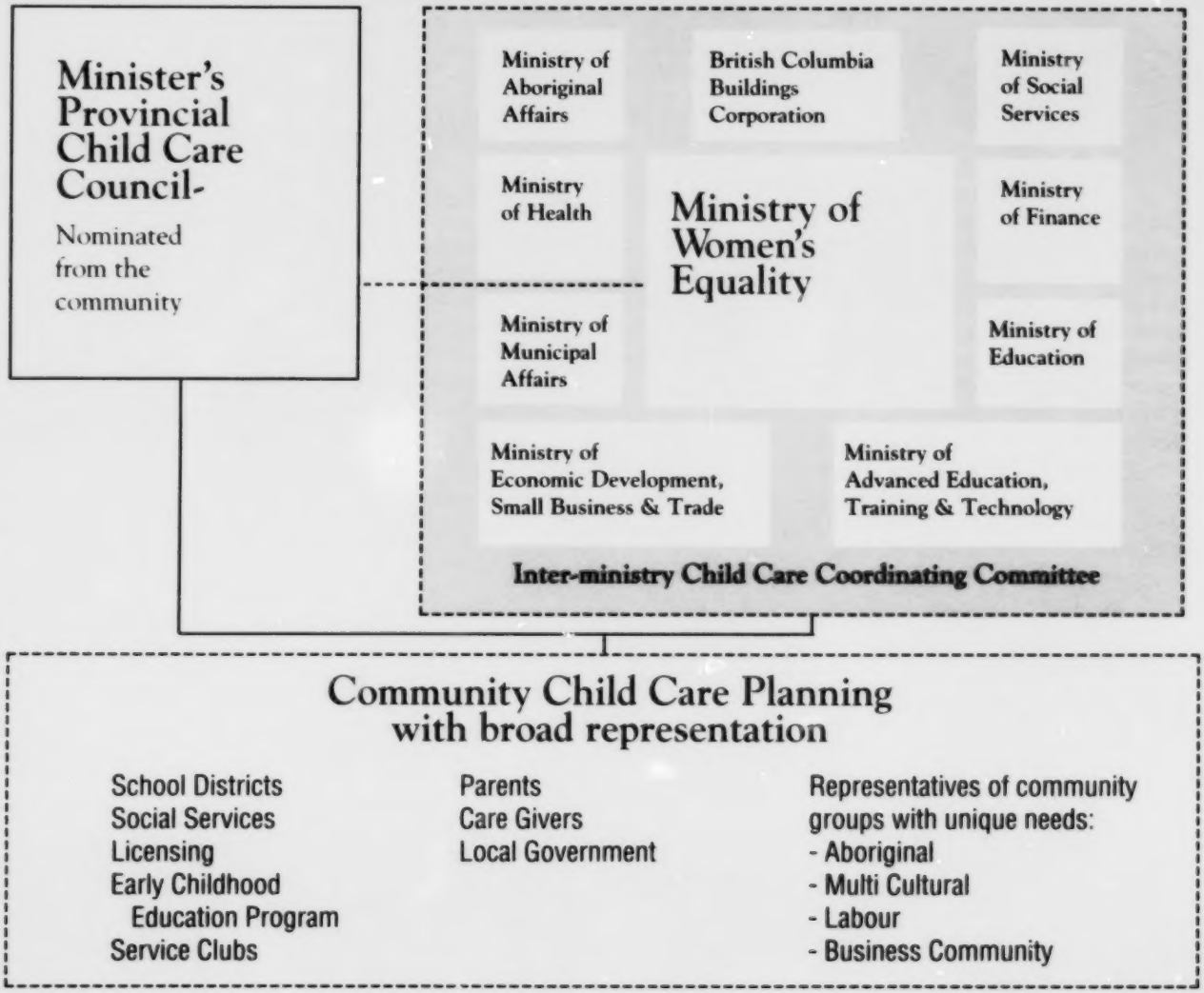
Community input will be through the provincial child care council and through a community planning program. Communities will be supported to develop their own child care planning process through the involvement of all interested individuals and organizations.

An open invitation will be extended to communities and groups to nominate individuals for appointment to the provincial child care council. Appointments to the council will reflect a range of geographical areas and interest groups. The council will provide advice to the Ministry of Women's Equality, input into development and will assist in evaluating the effects of new initiatives.
(See Planning Structures on page 8.)

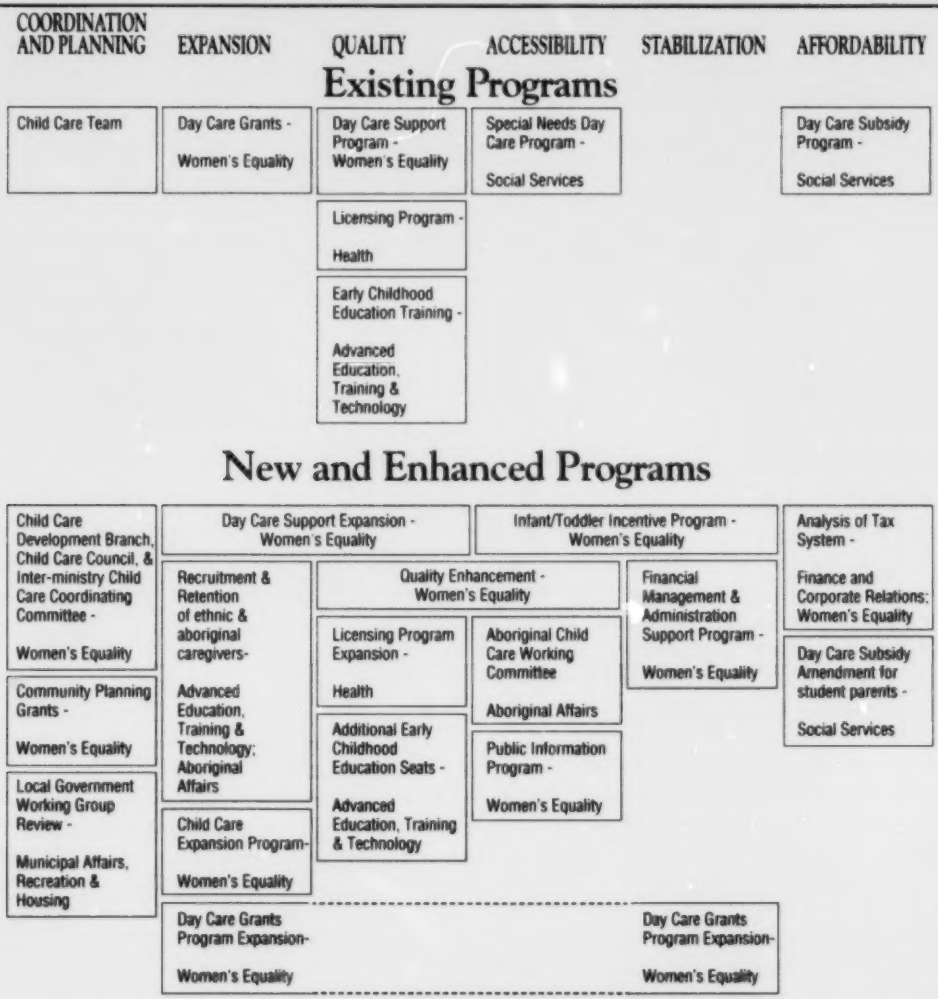
◆ Initiatives

The following initiatives have been developed to help communities to plan for and create child care services appropriate to their needs; to stabilize services and to increase access to affordable, quality child care.
(See Community-Based Child Care Planning and Development on page 9.)

Planning Structures



Community-Based Child Care Planning and Development


COORDINATION AND PLANNING
EXPANSION
QUALITY
ACCESSIBILITY
STABILIZATION
AFFORDABILITY
Existing Programs
Child Care Team
Day Care Grants - Women's Equality
Day Care Support Program - Women's Equality
Special Needs Day Care Program - Social Services
Day Care Subsidy Program - Social Services
Licensing Program - Health
Early Childhood Education Training - Advanced Education, Training & Technology
New and Enhanced Programs
Child Care Development Branch, Child Care Council, & Inter-ministry Child Care Coordinating Committee - Women's Equality
Day Care Support Expansion - Women's Equality
Infant/Toddler Incentive Program - Women's Equality
Analysis of Tax System - Finance and Corporate Relations: Women's Equality
Recruitment & Retention of ethnic & aboriginal caregivers - Advanced Education, Training & Technology; Aboriginal Affairs
Quality Enhancement - Women's Equality
Financial Management & Administration Support Program - Women's Equality
Licensing Program Expansion - Health
Aboriginal Child Care Working Committee - Aboriginal Affairs
Day Care Subsidy Amendment for student parents - Social Services
Community Planning Grants - Women's Equality
Additional Early Childhood Education Seats - Advanced Education, Training & Technology
Public Information Program - Women's Equality
Local Government Working Group Review - Municipal Affairs, Recreation & Housing
Child Care Expansion Program - Women's Equality
Day Care Grants Program Expansion - Women's Equality
Day Care Grants Program Expansion - Women's Equality

What Help Will Communities Receive To Address Local Child Care Needs?

Child care needs vary depending on the profile of each community and the special needs of families. The following initiatives have been developed to meet a variety of local needs.

Community Child Care Grants

Grants will be available to assist communities to plan for and develop local child care initiatives. These grants will assist communities to involve all interested individuals and organizations in planning for child care. Local statistical information and resource materials will be provided to communities to assist them with the planning process.

Grants will also be available to communities that have developed a local child care strategy, to child care organizations and to non-profit child care facilities to enhance the quality of child care. These quality enhancement grants are intended to help communities and provincial child care organizations to:

- test new models of delivering child care which meet the unique needs of families;
- develop resource materials; and,
- research and evaluate effective programs.

Quality enhancement grants will be targeted to locally developed projects which improve child care accessibility for families with unique child care needs such as:

- special needs child care;
- aboriginal child care;
- culturally sensitive child care;
- rural child care;
- emergency child care; and,
- child care for families with atypical work schedules.

The Child Care Grants Program will be administered by the Ministry of Women's Equality. Funding priorities will be established annually.

Review of Local Government By-laws and Procedures

A Local Government Working Group has been established to identify bylaws and practices which create barriers to child care development. The Working Group has representatives from four municipalities; the Union of B.C. Municipalities; the child care community; the ministries of Municipal Affairs, Recreation and Housing; Health; Social Services; and Women's Equality.

The purpose of the review is to analyze local government practices and to recommend strategies, guidelines and actions which will lead to improved child care in British Columbia. The enactment of "child care friendly" bylaws will support local child care expansion. The development of resource materials, streamlined procedures and increased local government involvement will assist communities to implement their child care plans.

Aboriginal Child Care

An aboriginal child care committee will be established to provide information, assistance and guidance on the formulation of provincial child care policies and programs sensitive to the needs of aboriginal people.

The ministries of Aboriginal Affairs and Women's Equality will work with aboriginal people to develop a plan for aboriginal "owned and controlled" child care programs which are culturally appropriate and, reflect the diverse values of First Nations communities.

The aboriginal child care committee will guide the development of planning for culturally appropriate early childhood education curriculum; aboriginal child care facilities; and opportunities which promote integration of children from all cultures into all services.

Inter-ministry coordination will ensure that policy and program development is designed to be inclusive of aboriginal peoples, other cultural groups and special needs children.

Special Needs Day Care Program Review

The Ministry of Social Services funds special needs day care for children who require additional support and services, due to physical, mental or emotional handicaps. Integrated services are purchased by the Ministry in local communities in all types of child care facilities.

The Ministry of Social Services is conducting a review of this program to address issues identified by field staff, parents and caregivers. The need for program changes will be based on the outcome of research on current service delivery; a literature review; and consultation with stakeholders. The Ministry of Women's Equality and representatives from other key ministries are involved as a reference group.

A fundamental consideration in delivery of this service is to ensure that children with special needs are provided with programs and care which recognizes them as children first, allowing lots of opportunity for social interaction and play, while supporting them to participate to their maximum potential.

How Will Government Enhance Child Care?

Government will do this in a variety of ways: by reviewing regulations; by expanding existing programs; and by making the application process easier for parents.

Reviewing The Community Care Facility Act and Child Care Regulation

Standards specified in the Community Care Facility Act and the Child Care Regulation are one way of affecting quality in child care. The challenge is to create standards which protect the health, safety and well-being of children in child care settings, without unnecessarily inhibiting the development of new child care spaces.

To achieve this balance, the Community Care Facilities Branch, Ministry of Health, will take the lead role in coordinating the review of the Community Care Facility Act and the Child Care Regulation to identify changes that can be made to remove barriers to expansion without compromising standards of care. Particular attention will be given to developing regulations which support flexible models to meet community needs and flexible age groupings in family day care homes.

The review and rewrite of the Child Care Regulation will be guided by a committee of non-government organizations, parents, and representatives from the ministries of Women's Equality; Health; Social Services; Advanced Education, Training and Technology; and B.C. Buildings Corporation.

Enhanced Day Care Support Program

The Day Care Support Program was established by the Ministry of Social Services to support informal caregivers and increase access to child care for low income families. This successful program will be transferred to the Ministry of Women's Equality and expanded to provide resource and referral service for all types of child care. In addition, services will be expanded to more communities.

This initiative will result in an increase of supported informal and licensed family caregivers; improving families' access to child care; and child care training opportunities for interested parents, caregivers, and community groups.

Making Child Care More Affordable

The Ministry of Social Services administers the Day Care Subsidy Program to assist eligible families with the cost of day care for children 12 years of age and under. This program is a family support service, enabling parents to prepare for and/or maintain employment and financial independence, and providing relief during prolonged illness or other family crises. Initiatives will be introduced to improve access to the Day Care Subsidy Program for working parents.

In August, 1991, a significant subsidy rate increase resulted in a 20% increase for infant/toddler care and a 12% increase for all other types of care. The Ministry of Social Services will continue to assess the difference between the actual market cost of care and the subsidy rate, to determine the need for future rate increases and to determine the need for adjustments to the income exemption level.

The current day care subsidy policy will be amended to improve access for student parents.

Research will be undertaken to determine the impact of current taxation policy on parents' choice to either work outside the home and purchase child care services or to stay at home to care for their children.

Training Initiatives

The quality of child care is enhanced by the availability of training opportunities for all caregivers. The Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology will provide increased training for informal and licensed caregivers.

These training opportunities will form an educational ladder with credit towards the next level granted as course requirements are completed.

Curriculum/program development initiatives to be introduced include:

- ◇ the development of family day care and school-age care curricula;
- ◇ revisions to the basic and post-basic early childhood education curricula to enhance quality and consistency and to ensure inclusive programming;
- ◇ development of materials for distance education use; and,
- ◇ development of an inventory of the continuing education needs of child care workers.

The Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology will work with colleges to remove barriers to transferability between the various colleges' early childhood education programs.

Multi-cultural Initiatives

To achieve culturally inclusive child care, we need to be able to recruit caregivers in informal and licensed programs from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

A project will be initiated to remove barriers and develop strategies for the recruitment and retention of aboriginal and ethnic caregivers.

These initiatives will provide better access to training for under-represented cultural groups and will result in increased availability of culturally responsive child care.

How Will The Existing Supply Of Child Care Be Stabilized?

Priorities for stabilization include offering financial management and administration support to non-profit child care organizations, small business development support to child care operators, and grants to stabilize and increase infant/toddler spaces.

Financial Management and Administration Support Program

The Financial Management and Administration Support Program, administered by the Ministry of Women's Equality, will assist non-profit child care facilities to develop and maintain financially sound management practices, through the provision of a range of services, including:

- ◇ a non-profit child care facilities operations manual;
- ◇ a financial consultation service for child care facilities threatened with closure and in need of financial restructuring;
- ◇ information on existing funding programs, and where available, additional information from local communities; and,
- ◇ training opportunities and workshops on financial management, fund raising strategies, and board development.

The goal of this program is to assist in stabilizing existing programs which are experiencing financial difficulties, and assist new programs to develop sound financial management practices.

Infant/Toddler Incentive Grants

An infant/toddler incentive grant will be provided to all licensed group child care centres (excluding pre-school and child-minding programs) and family providers enrolling infants and toddlers. This new program, administered by the Ministry of Women's Equality, will result in an increased, stable supply of licensed, quality child care for infants and toddlers.

Support to Independent Child Care Operators

In British Columbia, family-based child care is a growing small business. There are approximately 1,421 licensed family care providers, and much more care is provided informally. In addition, there are an estimated 235 licensed, private group-care facilities. The Ministry of Economic Development, Small Business and Trade, in partnership with other ministries that support child care, will assist independent child care operators in the development and delivery of quality child care programs. This includes:

- the distribution and exchange of information related to child care as a small business, and particularly, as an opportunity for women in business;
- development of a manual identifying the operations and marketing functions specific to family-based child care; and,
- delivery of a training module addressing the business side of child care.

These initiatives will help to stabilize and retain quality independent child care facilities, and will encourage those in the informal market to seek licensed status.

Exploring Ways to Improve Caregivers' Wages and Working Conditions

Generally, child care workers are women who work for low wages and limited benefits. This situation has been identified as a factor in high staff turnover and can negatively impact program quality.

Government is determined to address economic equality for women, but elimination of the wage gap cannot be achieved immediately. An ongoing objective is to eliminate low pay in female-dominated occupations including child care.

As part of its initiatives on pay equity, Women's Equality will undertake a study on wage levels in the wider human services sector. At the same time, the Ministry will undertake analysis of current wage levels by surveying registered early childhood educators and examining the results of the National Wages and Working Conditions Study. This analysis will identify ways to improve wages and benefits for caregivers.

Improved recruitment and retention of child care staff will help enhance the quality of care that children receive.

How Will The Supply Of Child Care Options Be Expanded?

Child care will be expanded through the coordination of a variety of initiatives, including:

- child care expansion planning which incorporates communities' identified needs;
- supports to expansion such as:
  - caregiver training,
  - expansion of the Day Care Support and Day Care Grants programs; and
- development of policy to address balancing work and family.

Coordinated Expansion Program

The Ministry of Women's Equality will coordinate expansion planning, taking into account existing community resources and seeking the most effective ways to meet expansion priorities.

A **capital grant fund** will be available to non-profit societies for community-sponsored projects; and ministry budget planning will identify the need for child care in ministries and in publicly-funded institutions such as hospitals, schools, and post-secondary institutions.

Funding approvals will be based on availability of community resources and will focus on the most under-served areas such as school-age, infant/toddler care, and care which supports flexible work hours. Priority for these funds will be targeted to communities with the greatest economic need, to expand child care spaces that meet local needs.

Ministries responsible for capital construction budgets will support and encourage public institutions such as hospitals, colleges and schools to develop child care facilities. Where feasible, the British Columbia Buildings Corporation will work with ministries to plan child care facilities in any new construction of provincial government buildings. The decision to include child care in these new buildings will be based on need, the availability of existing resources and the feasibility of the particular site. Public sector child care construction planning will be coordinated with non-profit expansion initiatives through the Child Care Development Branch to ensure the best use of resources.

Local school boards have the potential to play an important role in the expansion and delivery of school-based child care by providing access to school property and/or facilities. Many school districts are already involved in supporting child care and many require assistance to maintain the existing programs. A working group consisting of parents, representatives from the B.C. School Trustees' Association, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Women's Equality will look at ways of making it easier for schools to become involved.

This initiative, in combination with other expansion initiatives, will result in the expansion of school-based child care for school-age children.

Expansion of child care services in public sector buildings and retention and expansion of community-sponsored programs will increase the number of spaces for all children particularly infant/toddlers; school-age children; and children from low income families. It will provide shift-working parents with more options, and provide more families with access to work-site child care.

Expansion of the Day Care Grants Program

The Ministry of Social Services' Day Care Grants Program, will be transferred to the Ministry of Women's Equality. It provides non-profit societies with funding for emergency repairs, relocation and start-up costs.

This program will be enhanced to meet increased demands from expansion and stabilization initiatives. Day Care Support Programs will be assisted to purchase equipment for lending to caregivers.

These additional funds will result in improved quality through assistance to non-profit centres to maintain and repair facilities. Increased access to start-up funds will support the expansion of child care spaces. Lending equipment to supported informal and licensed family caregivers will remove one of the barriers to providing infant/toddler care and will enhance program quality.

Increased Licensing Officers

The Ministry of Health will increase the number of child care licensing officers to support the expansion of licensed facilities.

Improved licensing will ensure appropriate processing of applications and monitoring of facilities. Increased access to licensing officers for consultation and regulatory assessments will assist caregivers to enhance quality.

Increasing the availability of caregiver training

The Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology will increase training spaces in provincially-funded community colleges. Community colleges will be encouraged to identify training needs as part of the community planning process. These training spaces will support the new training initiatives (family caregiver training and training for providers of school-age care), and delivery of training through part-time and distance education options. This will result in a sufficient supply of trained caregivers to support the planned expansion of child care spaces and increased access to training in all regions of the province.

Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities

Through the Ministry of Women's Equality, research is underway on current personnel practices and their impact on families' ability to meet their obligations as parents and as workers. The effectiveness and benefits of existing practices will be catalogued to provide information to employers and employees on exemplary personnel practices which help to balance work and family responsibilities. An information package describing various options and models for increasing the flexibility of work arrangements will be developed from the research findings.

In addition, a work-related child care guide for hospital workers will be available to employers, unions and employee associations with information on a variety of ways that employers can assist shift-working employees to balance work and family responsibilities.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The child care plan is the first step in an ongoing process of improving child care. Community input in identifying new and emerging needs and evaluating how well the programs are working, - through the child care council, and the community planning program - will be critical to this process. The Ministry of Women's Equality, in partnership with other ministries dedicated to supporting child care, will coordinate policy development and program implementation based on identified community needs.

Programs will be implemented over the next six months, immediate priority being given to those programs and initiatives aimed at stabilizing existing child care services. Organizations and individuals concerned about child care will be kept informed of new initiatives as they are being introduced. Your feedback and comments on child care initiatives are essential to the development of effective policies and programs.

The government recognizes and appreciates the skills, expertise and hard work of community groups and organizations in advocating on behalf of children and families. This expertise and commitment will continue to play an important role in the development of quality, affordable, accessible child care.

This child care plan is an important part of the government's commitment to working with communities to build a healthy and secure future for our children.